



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS
Washington, D.C. 20231
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/824,064	04/03/2001	Eva Ingegerd Ejerhed	003300-769	9262

21839 7590 02/20/2003

BURNS DOANE SWECKER & MATHIS L L P
POST OFFICE BOX 1404
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22313-1404

EXAMINER

HARPER, V PAUL

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

2654

DATE MAILED: 02/20/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/824,064

Applicant(s)

EJERHED, EVA INGEGERD

Examiner

V. Paul Harper

Art Unit

2654

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on ____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 2,6.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Information Disclosure Statement

1. The Examiner has considered the references listed in the Information Disclosure Statements dated **05/29/01, 07/05/02, and 01/15/02**. Copies of the Information Disclosure Statements are attached to this office action.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

2. Claims 1, 12 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Goldberg et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,895,466), hereinafter referred to as Goldberg.

Regarding claim 1, Goldberg discloses an automated natural language understanding customer service system. Goldberg's system includes the following methods: generating natural language keys for a database by applying natural language analysis to the database (col. 2, lines 60-64), which corresponds to "wherein said natural language text database has been analyzed with respect to syntactic functions of constituents, lexical meaning of word tokens, and clause boundaries"; analyzing a received natural language query by performing both vocabulary analysis

Art Unit: 2654

and syntactic/semantic analysis on the query (col. 2, lines 40-47), which corresponds to “wherein said natural language question comprises a question clause, comprising the steps of: analyzing a computer readable representation of said question clause with respect to syntactic functions of its constituents and the lexical meaning of its word tokens”; generating a set of “keys” that can be used to query a database (col. 2, lines 45-51), which corresponds to “defining, in response to the analysis step, a set of conditions for a clause in said natural language text database to constitute an answer to said question clause, said conditions relating to the syntactic functions of constituents and the lexical meaning of word tokens in said clause”; generating answers indexed to the natural language keys (col. 2, lines 60-64) and sending the answers to the customer (Fig. 2 **190**), which corresponds to “identifying clauses in said natural language text database that satisfy said conditions; and returning answers to said question clause by means of the identified clauses that matches said conditions.”

Regarding claim 12, Goldberg teaches everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 1); in addition, Goldberg teaches that the answer is found and sent to the customer (Fig. 2 **160 190**, col. 4, lines 4-6), which corresponds to “extracting from said natural language text database portions of text comprising clauses satisfying said conditions.”

Claim 13 is a system claim with limitations that correspond to the limitations given above in claim 1 and is rejected for the same reasons given in the rejection of claim 1.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 2-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goldberg in view of Hedin et al. (U.S. Patent 5,386,556), hereinafter referred to as Hedin.

Regarding claim 2, Goldberg teaches everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 1); in addition, Goldberg teaches that a syntactic and semantic analysis is performed on the query (col. 2, lines 40-45), but Goldberg does not specifically teach "a verb condition stipulating that a clause constitutes an answer to said question clause if a lexically headed constituent having the syntactic function of main verb of said question clause has a corresponding lexically headed constituent in said clause bearing the syntactic function of main verb and having an equivalent lexical meaning." However, the examiner contends that this concept was well known in the art, as taught by Hedin.

Hedin discloses a natural language analyzing apparatus and method that parses a query and includes a representation for a verb (Fig. 3A, col. 8, lines 35-48).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Goldberg by specifically providing a parse of

the query that includes the verb, as taught by Hedin, for the purpose of indicating an action.

Regarding claim 3, Goldberg teaches everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 1); in addition, Goldberg teaches that a syntactic and semantic analysis is performed on the query (col. 2, lines 40-45), but Goldberg does not specifically teach “a subject condition stipulating that a clause constitutes an answer to said question clause if a lexically headed constituent having the syntactic function of subject of said question clause has a corresponding lexically headed constituent in said clause having the syntactic function of subject and having an equivalent lexical meaning.” However, the examiner contends that this concept was well known in the art, as taught by Hedin.

Hedin discloses a natural language analyzing apparatus and method that parses a query and includes a representation for a subject (Fig. 2B, col. 5, lines 32-44).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Goldberg by specifically providing a parse of the query that includes a subject condition, as taught by Hedin, for the purpose of indicating entities and relationships.

Regarding claim 4, Goldberg teaches everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 1); in addition, Goldberg teaches that a syntactic and semantic analysis is performed on the query (col. 2, lines 40-45), but Goldberg does not specifically teach “an object condition stipulating that a clause constitutes an answer to said question clause if a lexically headed constituent having the syntactic function of object of said question clause has a corresponding lexically headed constituent in said clause having

Art Unit: 2654

the syntactic function of object and having an equivalent lexical meaning.” However, the examiner contends that this concept was well known in the art, as taught by Hedin.

Hedin discloses a natural language analyzing apparatus and method that parses a query and includes a representation for an object (Fig. 2B, col. 5, lines 32-44).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Goldberg by specifically providing a parse of the query that includes an object condition, as taught by Hedin, for the purpose of indicating entities and relationships.

Regarding claim 5, Goldberg teaches everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 1); in addition, Goldberg teaches that a syntactic and semantic analysis is performed on the query (col. 2, lines 40-45), but Goldberg does not specifically teach “a manner adverb condition stipulating that a clause constitutes an answer to said question clause if a lexically headed constituent having the syntactic function of manner adverb of said question clause has a corresponding lexically headed constituent in said clause having the syntactic function of manner adverb and having an equivalent lexical meaning.” However, the examiner contends that this concept was well known in the art, as taught by Hedin.

Hedin discloses a natural language analyzing apparatus and method that parses a query and includes a representation for a verbal construct (col. 8, lines 43-48), which would inherently include manner adverbs.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Goldberg by specifically providing a parse of

Art Unit: 2654

the query that includes manner adverbs, as taught by Hedin, for the purpose of indicating the manner in which an action is performed.

Regarding claim 6, Goldberg teaches everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 1); in addition, Goldberg teaches that a syntactic and semantic analysis is performed on the query (col. 2, lines 40-45), but Goldberg does not specifically teach “a place adverb condition stipulating that a clause constitutes an answer to said question clause if a lexically headed constituent having the syntactic function of place adverb of said question clause has a corresponding lexically headed constituent in said clause having the syntactic function of place adverb and having an equivalent lexical meaning.” However, the examiner contends that this concept was well known in the art, as taught by Hedin.

Hedin discloses a natural language analyzing apparatus and method that parses a query and includes a representation for a verbal construct (col. 8, lines 43-48), which would inherently include place adverbs.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Goldberg by specifically providing a parse of the query that includes place adverbs, as taught by Hedin, for the purpose of indicating the direction in which an action is taking place.

Regarding claim 7, Goldberg teaches everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 1); in addition, Goldberg teaches that a syntactic and semantic analysis is performed on the query (col. 2, lines 40-45), but Goldberg does not specifically teach “a time adverb condition stipulating that a clause constitutes an answer to said question

Art Unit: 2654

clause if a lexically headed constituent having the syntactic function of time adverb of said question clause has a corresponding lexically headed constituent in said clause having the syntactic function of time adverb and having an equivalent lexical meaning.” However, the examiner contends that this concept was well known in the art, as taught by Hedin.

Hedin discloses a natural language analyzing apparatus and method that parses a query and includes a representation for a verbal construct (col. 8, lines 43-48), which would inherently include time adverbs.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Goldberg by specifically providing a parse of the query that includes time adverbs, as taught by Hedin, for the purpose of indicating the time that an action is taking place.

Regarding claim 8, Goldberg teaches everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 1); in addition, Goldberg teaches that a syntactic and semantic analysis is performed on the query (col. 2, lines 40-45), but Goldberg does not specifically teach “a causal adverb condition stipulating that a clause constitutes an answer to said question clause if a lexically headed constituent having the syntactic function of causal adverb of said question clause has a corresponding lexically headed constituent in said clause having the syntactic function of causal adverb and having an equivalent lexical meaning.” However, the examiner contends that this concept was well known in the art, as taught by Hedin.

Hedin discloses a natural language analyzing apparatus and method that parses a query and includes a representation for a verbal construct (col. 8, lines 43-48), which would inherently include causal adverbs.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Goldberg by specifically providing a parse of the query that includes causal adverbs, as taught by Hedin, for the purpose of indicating the reason that an action is taking place.

Regarding claims 9 and 10, Goldberg teaches everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 1); in addition, Goldberg teaches that a syntactic and semantic analysis is performed on the query (col. 2, lines 40-45), but Goldberg does not specifically teach "wherein there is an interrogative pronoun in said question clause, further comprising the step of: determining the syntactic function of the queried constituent of said question clause in response to the analysis step and said interrogative pronoun; and wherein the syntactic function of the queried constituent of said question clause is determined as the syntactic function of said interrogative pronoun." However, the examiner contends that this concept was well known in the art, as taught by Hedin.

Hedin discloses a natural language analyzing apparatus and method that parses a query and includes a representation for an interrogative pronoun (Fig. 2B, 3A, 3B, col. 8, lines 34-65).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Goldberg by specifically providing a parse of

the query that includes an interrogative pronouns, as taught by Hedin, since questions commonly begin with interrogative pronouns.

4. Claim 11 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goldberg in view of Hedin and further in view of Voorhees ("Using WordNet for Text Retrieval," in *WordNet an Electronic Lexical Database*, by Christiane Fellbaum, pp. 295-301).

Regarding claim 11, Goldberg in view of Hedin teach everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 9), but Goldberg in view of Hedin do no specifically teach "wherein the analysis of lexical meaning of word tokens comprises an analysis of the broad semantic class of each word token of said natural language text database, and wherein the broad semantic class of the queried constituent is determined in response to the interrogative pronoun." However, the examiner contends that this concept was well known in the art, as taught by Voorhees.

Voorhees teaches the use of WordNet for text retrieval where a query expansion can occur by selecting additional words to express a queries concept (p. 295, §12.4, ¶1-2).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Goldberg in view of Hedin by specifically providing a query expansion, as taught by Voorhees, so as not to miss relevant answers.

Art Unit: 2654

5. Claims 14 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable Goldberg in view of well known prior art (MPEP 2144.03).

Regarding claims 14 and 15, Goldberg teaches everything claimed, as applied above (see claim 1), but Goldberg does not specifically teach the use of the following: "A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for a general-purpose computer to perform the steps recited in the claim 1, and a computer program comprising computer executable instructions for performing the steps recited in the claim 1." However, the examiner takes official notice of the fact that the use of a computer readable medium and a computer program for the purpose of implementing methods similar to Goldberg's was well known in the art.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Goldberg to specifically indicate that the described methods could be implemented on a computer, making the implementation more cost effective.

Citation of Pertinent Art

6. The following prior art made of record but not relied upon is considered pertinent to the applicant's disclosure:

- a. Julliard (U.S. Patent 6,202,064) discloses a linguistic search system using natural language techniques.

- b. Aliod et al. ("A Real World Implementation of Answer Extraction," in Proceedings of the 9th International Workshop on Database and Expert Systems Workshop (NLIS-98), 1998) teaches answer extraction from unedited text using arbitrary questions.

Conclusion

Any response to this office action should be mailed to:

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Washington, D.C. 20231

or faxed to:

(703) 872-9314

Hand-delivered responses should be brought to:

Crystal Park II
2121 Crystal Drive
Arlington, VA.
Sixth Floor (Receptionist)

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Dr. V. Paul Harper whose telephone number is (703) 305-4197. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Marsha D. Banks-Harold, can be reached on (703) 305-4379. The fax phone number for the Technology Center 2600 is (703) 872-9314.

Art Unit: 2654

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Technology Center 2600 Customer Service office whose telephone number is (703) 306-0377.

VPH/vph
February 4, 2003

Marsha D Banks-Harold
MARSHA D. BANKS-HAROLD
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2600